

Sinha seeks to “broaden the significance of feminist historiography” by aligning herself with a form of “materialist-feminist” analysis which does not prioritize gender (p. 182). Yet her nod toward feminist scholarship on the sex-gender system (p. 11) seems to leave this prioritization intact, even as the more interesting questions about whether Victorian Britain and nineteenth-century India, as part of the same “imperial social formation,” shared a singular sex-gender system, or interlocking but contradictory sex-gender systems, remain unasked. In chapter 4, for example, the familiar scenario of British and Indian men debating the age of consent is replayed without consideration of the question of women’s agency or how colonial debates about women may have worked to consolidate patriarchy in the “imperial social formation,” despite Sinha’s earlier gesture in this direction (p. 44). She concludes unoriginally that “the history of colonial masculinity exposes the patriarchal politics of nationalism” (p. 181), but fails to make the link between colonial masculinity and imperial patriarchal structures. The term “patriarchy” itself is left oddly undefined.

Sinha’s emphasis on the *logic* of colonial masculinity at times also prevents her from fruitfully exploring the contradictions of the nineteenth-century British/Indian imperial social formation. For example, in chapter 2, instead of exploring the exclusion of elite Bengali men from the Indian volunteer corps as a site of contradiction within imperial racial ideology at a moment when colonial officials needed to consolidate elite support, Sinha argues that the notion of effeminacy was introduced to justify exclusion. The presence of the masculine “martial” elites would seem to complicate her argument, however. She concludes weakly that the strategy of separating “martial” from “non-martial” Indian elites evolved “merely to justify the racial exclusivity of volunteering in India” (pp. 82, 86) in order for colonial rule to be consistent with professed ideals. The difficulty here is that her analysis highlights precisely how colonial rule was, more often than not, quite inconsistent with its professed ideals.

Few would argue with Sinha about the value of understanding metropole/colony relations as part of an imperial social formation. However, she fails to achieve a description of the imperial social formation which would productively unsettle the national/colonial dichotomy of current historiography. Though imperial social formations do not transcend, but rather work through, such dichotomies, the book lapses into a retelling of what the British did in India, and Indian nationalist response to it. Sinha is able to demonstrate that what the British did in India was linked to what they did at home, but is unable to show how what happened in the colony might have reshaped the politics of the metropole. There are, indeed, suggestive passages in the book which point to how British class and gender relations in turn shaped and were affected by events in the Indian colony (see particularly pp. 9–10, 54–55, 71–72, 153, 161–63), but they are too few and sketchy to sustain the book’s central project. Without more extensive treatment of how gender, class, and race relations were mutually played out in Victorian Britain and nineteenth-century India, what Sinha’s study amplifies is perhaps less the workings of an imperial social formation than the category of imperial history itself.

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Tamil Love Poetry and Poetics. By TAKANOBU TAKAHASHI. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1995. xiv, 255 pp. \$95.00 (cloth).

The title of Takanobu Takahashi’s rich, intelligent book should be changed to *Tamil Love Poetry VERSUS Poetics*, in that the stated intention of the volume is to

“‘confront’ poetics with poetry” (p. 10), and “to investigate the relationship between the description of *akam* poetry in the erudite works . . . [and in] the texts of the actual poems . . .” (p. 9). In other words, Takahashi poses a crucial, fundamental question in this book: Just how influential are poetic “grammars” in their attempts to provide normative rules for actual poetic composition and for authors themselves, not just for the authors of *caṅkam* poems, but of later works on poetic theory?

Takahashi not only offers new strategies for understanding the process of reading and interpretation in classical Tamil literature, but also offers us extremely useful descriptions and summaries of *caṅkam*-period texts, grappling with the tricky problem of providing reasonable dates for the *Tolkāppiyam*, the earliest extant work on Tamil grammar and poetics. In chapter 2, Takahashi puts forth a very sensible and concise discussion of the inconsistent linguistic and syntactic textures found in the *Tolkāppiyam*’s third section on poetics and usage, the *Poruḷatikāram*. He works through problems of organization, the arrangement of stanzas, interpolation, and the influence of Sanskrit, and makes sensitive and well-reasoned statements regarding the *Tolkāppiyam*’s authorship. Takahashi offers sound new ideas regarding the *Tolkāppiyam*’s date, and characterizes the concerns and the individual writing styles of the text’s primary commentators. He provides wonderful insights into how theoretical works in Tamil may have been used by actual authors, and discusses the role of the *Poruḷatikāram* (Takahashi dates the oldest “layers” of this text at *ca.* the first to third centuries C.E.) versus that of a somewhat later work on poetics, the *Iraiyānār Akapporuḷ* (*ca.* fifth or sixth century C.E.) in this capacity. It takes a great deal of courage and imagination, let alone scholarly acumen, to hazard statements of this nature, and Takahashi deserves our applause for this. He clearly demonstrates how the *Poruḷatikāram* and later texts on poetics interlock and differ from one another; how, for instance, the *Akapporuḷ Viḷakkam* (*ca.* thirteenth century C.E.) rearranges *akam* themes, and how this particular text has a serial, or narrative, understanding of love episodes, as opposed to the more isolated “thematic” or “contextual” understanding that is exhibited by the *Poruḷatikāram*.

In chapter 3, Takahashi points out that no one has researched the practice of ascribing a *turai*—the thematic or contextualizing headnote—to individual poems, especially in regard to date and authorship. He rightly criticizes unexamined, careless scholarly reliance on the *turai* for interpretation. This reflexive reliance on the thematic headnote has developed in us the tendency to ignore nuance in reading an actual *caṅkam* poem. In other words, we tend to read a verse only with superficial knowledge devoid of a true understanding that we are reading “landscape language,” and not just mechanically decoding strings of symbol and metaphor. Takahashi argues on philological grounds that these headnotes were attached to the *akam* poems after they were included in the anthologies, and makes interesting remarks on their style and development (pp. 42–43).

It is in chapter 6 where Takahashi truly demonstrates how the *turai* is not necessarily fixed, and how the complex and highly articulated themes expressed by the *turai* in Tamil literature have been understood differently by different grammarians and commentators throughout the history of Tamil letters. This furthers Takahashi’s argument that we need to understand the *akam* poem not as an isolated object to be decoded, but as a part of a larger narrative. The author not only illustrates the interrelatedness of the five *akattiṅais* (the “interior” or “love landscapes”), but also the interrelatedness of the poems themselves, and how they are connected within an individual anthology and across anthologies extratextually not just by general *tiṅai* categories, but by the *turais* as well.

Chapter 6 also contains some well-measured and sensitive comments on how to think about and discuss certain stock characters of *akam* poetry. Takahashi's comments, especially on poetic constructions of *tāy* ("mother") and *parattai* ("the other woman" or "courtesan") are especially enlightened. Although this book might be too technical and particularized for an outsider to Tamil literature, it deserves a place on the shelf of every serious scholar of Tamil, and should be included in South Asia reference collections in college and university libraries.

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The Roots of Nationalism: Sri Lanka. By ANANDA WICKREMERATNE.
Colombo: Karunaratne and Sons, 1995. xviii, 313 pp. \$19.00 paper.

Wickremeratne's text, let me say at the outset, is all that is promised. It is an erudite addition to the historiography of nineteenth-century Sri Lanka, a product undoubtedly of painstaking research, subtle historical location, and flowing prose. It is, in other words, a finely crafted work of a thoughtful scholar.

Read another way, however, the book is a conversation with an important strand of contemporary scholarship on Sri Lankan, as well as South Asian, nationalisms. In that broad swath of scholarship, written from different standpoints, contemporary South Asian nationalism is understood in relation to nineteenth century movements of "social reform." In the literature on these movements, the issue usually at stake is the kind or quality of political space that the movement is thought to occupy. For example, it is possible to locate the movements under the signs of their leaders—Jyotiba Phule, Dayanand Saraswathi, Arumuga Navalar, or Anagarika Dharmapala—or to locate them in the political space made by the subordinated groups that constituted them. Wickremeratne's intervention, even though limited to the Sri Lankan case of Dharmapala, raises questions about this understanding of nationalism.

That question, put in my words, is this: what are the colonial conditions of possibility of these movements? Undoubtedly, there are many, but Wickremeratne's concern is primarily with but one such condition, the emergence of Christian missionary education and the decline of Buddhist temple education in the latter half of the nineteenth century. This historical movement, Wickremeratne argues, had several unintended consequences.

On the one hand, the growth of missionary education positioned schools in a new spatial logic across the island, changing the overall distribution of educational resources. For example, it is argued here, as it often is, that the Jaffna peninsula was a net beneficiary of these new developments. But furthermore, by choosing to favor education in English over education in the vernaculars, new social possibilities were enabled. In this scheme of things, then, upward mobility was about education, which was, in turn, about learning a certain kind of English. Yet, given that the distribution of resources was not, itself, even, that upward mobility carried regional unevenness with it.

This marked rupture in both the style and place of education in social life is located concomitantly with the decline of Buddhist temple education. Wickremeratne is able to show that this practice of teaching, where Buddhist monks used their temples to school the laity, became quite subordinate to that of missionary education by the late nineteenth century. This is a fascinating consequence of colonial policy,